



GERALD R. FORD

January 21, 1992

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In 1964 at the end of the work of the Warren Commission, 26 volumes of the testimony of witnesses at hearings, coupled with thousands of exhibits, were published. All of the materials having any primary relevance to the questions of who killed President Kennedy and Dallas Police Officer J.D. Tippit and whether there was any domestic or foreign conspiracy were placed in the archives and made available to the public, except for the autopsy photographs and X-rays, which because of requests of the family of President Kennedy were made available only to qualified medical experts for examination.

There was relatively small amount of materials withheld from public access. The release of these materials now would demonstrate that in no way would they have any effect upon the final conclusions of the Warren Commission. These materials generally fell into three areas: (1) Materials that pertained to the methods of protecting a president from physical harm were not made available because it was felt that to disclose all of these materials would make it easier for some future potential assassin to harm the President of the United States. (2) Unsubstantiated allegations such as an oral communication to the FBI asserting that someone overheard another person say they would pay money to kill President Kennedy and other such types of allegations, which were thoroughly investigated and found to have no bearing on the assassination. These were not made public because of concerns of privacy for the people involved. (3) Some of the investigative materials pertaining to the investigation of possible foreign conspiracy were not made available to the public because of concern that the materials involved were so sensitive that they could point to the source of the material and in a sense "dry up the well" for

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that source ever to divulge any additional information to intelligence sources. Moreover, in some situations the sensitivity of the source was so great that to divulge the particular information might endanger the very life of that source where the source lived in a totalitarian country.

At the time, all of the members of the Warren Commission concurred in the decision to withhold from public access this relatively small amount of material because we knew that over 90 per cent of the materials were made available to the public and these materials constituted all of the evidence directly relevant to determining who killed President Kennedy and Officer Tippit and whether there was any domestic or foreign conspiracy.

David Belin, a member of the Warren Commission staff, following the completion of his service as Executive Director of the Rockefeller Commission called for a public release of all documents in the National Archives concerning the Warren Commission investigation as well as all documents in the CIA concerning the assassination of President Kennedy. He filed Freedom of Information Act Requests to gain release of these materials, all of which he had seen. At that particular time, I did not feel that there was sufficient passage of time to have all of these materials publicly released, primarily because of concern for sensitivity for the protection of sources and methods which were involved in the gathering of foreign intelligence information in the investigation of whether there was any foreign conspiratorial involvement in the assassination of President Kennedy.

However, in recent months, I have concluded that sufficient passage of time has now elapsed so that all materials in the National Archives concerning the assassination of President Kennedy should be made available to the public, except that the restrictions requested by the family of President Kennedy limiting access to the autopsy photographs and X-rays to qualified medical experts should be continued. The specific

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limitation could, of course, be removed at the request of the Kennedy family.

I would also urge that all materials in the CIA pertaining to the investigation of the assassination of President Kennedy should be made available to the public. I would also recommend that Congress make available to the public all materials in the files of the House Select Committee on Assassinations pertaining to the investigation of the assassination of President Kennedy.

The House Select Committee on Assassinations, as you know, did conclude, as did the Warren Commission, that the first shot that struck President Kennedy was fired by Lee Harvey Oswald and passed through President Kennedy's neck and struck Governor Connolly, causing all of his wounds and that the second and fatal shot that struck President Kennedy's head was also fired by Lee Harvey Oswald, and that Lee Harvey Oswald was the gunman who killed Officer Tippit, and that in no way was the CIA conspiratorially involved. However, a majority of the members of the Committee concluded, based on the testimony of purported acoustical experts, that there was another shot fired by a gunman from the grassy knoll who missed not only all of the occupants of the presidential limousine, but also the limousine itself. Subsequently, the Committee on Ballistic Acoustics of the National Research Council concluded that the House Committee's "acoustic analyses do not demonstrate that there was a grassy knoll shot" and that "the acoustic impulses attributed to gun shots were recorded about one minute after the President had been shot and the motorcade had been instructed to go to the hospital" and that "therefore, reliable acoustic data do not support a conclusion that there was a second gunman."

I would urge that the National Research Council appoint a new panel of outstanding scientists with expertise in these matters who would review the acoustical evidence presented to the House Select Committee on Assassinations and the report of the

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initial Committee on Ballistic Acoustics of the National Research Council, interview the experts involved in the preparation of these reports, undertake an analysis of all of their findings and then reach a definitive conclusion and report those findings to the public.

Americans are entitled to know the truth about the assassination of President Kennedy. Those of us who served as members of the Warren Commission and those independent lawyers who served on the Commission staff know that truth: Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone gunman who killed President Kennedy and Police Officer J.D. Tippit on that tragic afternoon in Dallas, November 22, 1963.

In order to resolve any legitimate doubts of others, I hope you will be responsive to my suggestions in this communication.

Best regards,

The Honorable Louis Stokes
Chairman
House Select Committee on Assassinations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515